



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

SWITZERLAND AND THE WAR

BY PROFESSOR CHARLES BORGEAUD OF THE UNIVERSITY OF GENEVA

IN an hour of poetical prophetizing, Victor Hugo wrote an alexandrine which contributed not a little to his popularity in Switzerland:

La Suisse dans l'histoire aura le dernier mot.

The Swiss know well that the name of their country was penned here by the great French poet of the nineteenth century merely to exemplify a commonwealth of the Old World, where union of different races and common pursuit of the high ideals of mankind are aimed at through the medium of democracy. But they are not the less proud of the recognition. One may say the consciousness of the honor which the civilized world generally pays to them by believing in their fitness for such a task is now helping the little Confederation to face one of the hardest trials of its modern history.

To-day, as a century ago, our country, providentially preserved from the horrors of battles and invasion, stands yet in the midst of the conflagration. As in the days of Leipzig and Waterloo, she has to bear, although in peace, the moral distress of war to an extent which precludes comparison in this respect with any other neutral State of Europe.

We are living at the geographical center where the highest summits converge, where the largest rivers of the continent have their sources. We belong to three races, three tongues, three cultures. Our dearest wish is to be the connecting link between them, is to see them concur, to work with them toward the realization of the loftier ends of man. Now suddenly, through a cataclysm—the anonymous authors of which, whoever they be, appear to us burdened with a satanic responsibility—we see races and tongues and cultures arrayed against one another in a gigantic conflict, where war

has the character of a tremendous international struggle for life. All the nerves of the powerful States around us are strained for the supreme effort, and the two whirlwinds hurled against each other clash over our borders with such violence that we feel on us the chill of the abyss.

To weather the storm, the Republic of the present is far better prepared than the feeble, disheartened Confederation of divided cantons which emerged from the Napoleonic disaster. A federative Union, wisely organized on the solid basis of the Constitution of 1848—a frame of government which borrowed from that of the United States some of its best features—considerably strengthened by the revision of 1874, which successfully effected a far greater concentration of national energies with the help of the people's amendment on the Referendum, to-day's Swiss State may be called politically strong. It carries out the will of the citizens and normally, progressively, realizes its end.

The nation in arms constitutes the defensive force of the country. From his twentieth to his fiftieth year every Swiss is a soldier. Thus the 1st of August, which is now annually celebrated as the National day, in remembrance of the signature of the first Federal Pact in 1291, saw this year the mobilization of 300,000 men, active army (*Auszug*), *Landwehr*, and even *Landsturm*. At that date, the Government's Treasury incurred the heaviest military outlay of our annals: one and one-half million francs per day, which means, if adding to it the personal expenses incumbent upon the men themselves, nearly half a franc for every head of population.

Deeply hurt by the economic crisis and by the sacrifices which meant the sending of such forces to the border, Switzerland has nothing to expect from the issue of the world's conflict, in which her people serve as cover to the flank operations of the adversaries alternately, save the respect of all and the maintenance of the international standing which she conquered peacefully.

Happily enough, the credit of the country is of first rank and unimpaired, its national funds never ceased to be the object of negotiation, remaining comparatively very steady during the worst days of a crisis without precedent. There exists as yet no direct Federal tax, and important monopolies, like that of tobacco, for instance, have been kept in reserve for the case of necessity.

In the moral sphere the task of the little free, neutral, and central State is still what it was during the nineteenth century, but in consequence of the unification of economic and intellectual intercourse, especially now through the enormous influence of the Press, of the news agencies of great European centers, that task has become incomparably more delicate, more difficult, than in former times. Foreigners will realize something of these difficulties when they consider that the people, whose eagerness for knowledge is proverbial, draw conclusions from their daily reading, discuss, sympathize, sometimes quite diversely because they start from opposite information received in different languages.

It is a conspicuous feature of the present war that it is waged not merely with the iron and fire of armies, but also with the weapons, quite up to date indeed, of disciplined, of trained public opinions. These weapons were placed more or less at the disposal of the General Staffs, who are concerned exclusively in having them serve their plans. As they obtained from their governments the exclusive monopoly of imparting news from the front, the various nations receive the same in special—oftentimes entirely conflicting—versions which follow the boundaries of languages and dominant intellectual influences.

Within the limits of the belligerents' territories this may be advocated as a consequence of martial law, as one of the necessities of modern warfare. But outside, with the neutrals who depend on more than one racial influence, it has the nefarious effect of extending the action of war across their boundaries by encroaching, on the battle-field of thought, upon their declared neutrality. Thus it can be observed that on vital questions of fact, presented in quite contrary versions by the press of the opposed camps, German, French, and Swiss are bitterly divided. It requires all the vigilance of their statesmen, all the prudence of their leading and best-informed intellectuals, to prevent such division becoming a political danger.

On the 1st of October, the Federal Government judged it expedient to issue an *Appeal to the Swiss People*, in which may be found, with the signature of President Hoffmann, such characteristic admonitions as the following:

In our way of judging events, in the expression of our sympathies for the concerned nations, we ought to observe the utmost reserve, we ought to avoid what could hurt the States and populations involved in the war and

refrain from every kind of partiality. To judge events with restraint and moderation does not imply renouncing sympathies and feelings. The heart of every citizen will continue to beat warmly for those to whom he is bound by peculiarly strong ties or whose fate is, before all, dear to him. It is only when every one observes that rule that we will be able to fulfil the duties which follow from our situation as a neutral State and maintain the good relations of our country with the others. Never was this more urgent than in the present overthrow of Europe, and never more difficult.

We call every citizen, and especially the Swiss journalists of all parties, of all languages, of all sections, to strict moderation. It is the Press which gives expression and direction to public opinion. To it belongs the noble task of keeping down unfettered passions, of opposing tendencies which divide, of exerting everywhere a wise and conciliating influence.

Out of the trial we are enduring will emerge better times of intellectual, economic, and political developments. To that effect, we need the concentration of all the energies of our people. There ought not to subsist in them any irreconcilable opposition of racial feelings. We see the ideal of our fatherland in a community of culture which rises above races and tongues. First of all we are Swiss, and only secondarily Latins or Germans. Above all sympathies for the nations to which we feel tied by common descent we place the welfare of Switzerland, our common good. To that welfare we must subordinate all the rest.

This appeal was heard: for the Federal idea the national feeling is deep-rooted enough in the hearts of our people to insure their enthusiastic response to the first call of their popular magistrates. It has its sources in the historical growth of the Federal State.

When the league of the three small Waldstaetten rose within the Empire in the twilight of medieval history, it was exclusively Germanic. So also was the greater league of the eight cantons up to the end of the fifteenth century. In those times the ideal of the mountaineers' bond was to preserve German liberty, to maintain German democracy against feudalism and Cæsarism. This led them to sever their connection with the Empire which had become the instrument of domination of the House of Austria. After their amazing triumph over Charles the Bold, which made them the first military power of the time, the Swiss acquired Burgundian territories and received into their league Burgundian partners. The Italian wars brought them Latin possessions on the southern side of the Alps. The Reformation, which helped Berne to become, through important western accessions from Savoy, the most powerful canton, considerably added to the weight of Latin elements in a larger confederation, and ultimately the political influence acquired by French thought during the eighteenth century,

especially at the end, when Switzerland was revolutionized under the lead of France, profoundly modified the original character of the Swiss State. Its *raison d'être* ceased to be exclusively German, not to become French, but to become international.

Modern Switzerland, ever conscious of her debt to the forefathers, carefully preserving her precious inheritance of liberty and democracy, has the duty to render these instrumental in the pursuit of a still higher ideal, the task which the genius of Victor Hugo poetically described as the climbing of the last summits of history.

The Swiss national idea, no more to be realized by racialism, is a creation of mind and of will, not of race and language. It is the result of ascent, not of descent. No Swiss race exists nowadays, but in spite of racial feuds there is a Swiss mentality, a Swiss union on the basis of which the nation develops and prospers. This fact ought to be emphasized at a time when so many despair of interracial understanding in the Old World. To be faithful to such a human ideal, the Swiss, after successfully trying to remain not morally neutral, as it is sometimes wrongly put, but mentally equitable, have to show their neighbors by deeds that they have at heart the desire to alleviate their sufferings in every way open to them. The activity of the Red Cross inaugurated by the Geneva Convention just fifty years ago is the most conspicuous testimony to that desire.

The small European State which, through the initiative of the sons of its foremost Latin city, had the honor to be the cradle of that great international institution, can quote a charter with articles for mitigating the barbarity of war as far back as the end of the fourteenth century. This document, which was signed by the eight cantons, dates from the times of the purely Germanic league and bears the name of the most romantic victory of its heroic age. It is called the Sempach Charter. By that compact, medieval pillaging is controlled by strict regulations. It is altogether prohibited during a battle. The churches, cloisters, and chapels are placed under the special protection of the Confederates. Burning or plundering of the same is strictly forbidden. Women are to be respected as long as they themselves abstain from taking part in the fighting. This is why that document is also known in our history by the name of the "*Frauenbrief*," or Women's Charter.

Thus, as early as 1393, German mountaineers and citizens showed to the world that liberty and democracy, for which they fought so bravely bareheaded and barebreasted against Duke Leopold of Austria and his iron-coated knights, was the liberty and democracy of the future, not of the past. Thus they broke the way which their remote offspring was one day to follow hand in hand with their Latin brethren.

The first International Conference of the Red Cross was held in 1863, under the lead of a special committee of the "*Société genevoise d'utilité publique*," having in General G. H. Dufour an illustrious and venerated chairman. When in the following year a diplomatic Congress, convened at the invitation of the Swiss Federal Council, adopted the celebrated Geneva Convention, dated the 22d of August, 1864, and signed by twelve States, a treaty not only initiated but really prepared by the same board of commissioners, they were practically confirmed as the "*Comité international de la Croix Rouge*." That committee of Genevese, of which Henri Dunant, the founder and the pioneer of the generous idea, and Gustave Moynier, the successor of General Dufour in the presidency, were at the start the most active members, has now behind it a never-ceasing activity of half a century, a success which no doubt would have been commemorated this year under the present chairmanship of M. Gustave Ador, member of the Swiss National Council, had not the great crisis in Europe put off any joyful celebration.

The "*Comité international*" was the promoter of the national Red Cross organizations which cover the civilized world, and it now serves for all as a central committee for correspondence and for action. One of its latest moves was a circular address to all belligerent Powers, dated September 19th, reminding them of the twenty-fifth Article of the Geneva Convention, revised in 1906, which places upon the commanders-in-chief of armies the duty of enforcing the strict observance of all the prescriptions of the same. It was issued at the urgent request of the Director of the Austro-Hungarian Red Cross, who sadly enough had to complain that the declared neutrality of the sick and wounded, without distinction of any kind, as well as the protection of the sanitary and personal services of the several States, was not everywhere adequately secured.

To the various duties which it has assumed in previous wars, and still performs with an unflinching zeal, the Geneva Committee had lately to add important new ones toward prisoners.

One knows that the Washington Conference of 1912, considering that prisoners of war as well as wounded may be the object of generosity, adopted a resolution according to which special boards should be formed by the several Red Cross organizations for the purpose of collecting and sending to the International Committee of Geneva the relief funds designed for soldiers in captivity. The International Committee, through neutral delegates accredited to the governments concerned, is to insure the remittance of the gifts intended for individuals and distribute the others among the several depots according to the intents of donors, the needs of prisoners, and the instructions of the military authorities. After having reminded all the national committees of the wording of that resolution, the "*Comité international*" proceeded to form a new special office at Geneva which bears the title "*Agence des prisonniers de guerre*."

The work of this office, which was started in September without funds of any kind and with free postage as its only material facility, was planned more liberally than the strict application of the Washington resolutions would have admitted. It extends to the transmission of the correspondence of prisoners of war with their families, to informing the latter about their dear missing ones, and to a wide field of inquiry not yet exactly defined. When one remembers that prisoners of war are already reckoned by hundreds of thousands, and that more than ten millions of men are in arms, one can form some idea of what such a task instantly became as soon as it was known. Some hundreds of letters were received and answered daily after the first weeks. After the first month, the official figure is from four to six thousand per day. Three hundred persons are now busy at this service. More will certainly be wanted.

The most interesting feature of the enterprise is that the work is done mostly by volunteers. Genevese and foreigners, gentlemen and ladies, compete in offering their services, and offers are so abundant that desks are booked in advance, vacancies being waited for like official berths.

Another new departure in the interest of the people who

are to live under martial law is what is being done now in Switzerland for the sake of the *civil* prisoners of war.

That in every country the non-neutral aliens are detained is known. Of these the individuals who are liable to bear arms in their own country may be assimilated with the military men in captivity and benefit as such from the protection of the Washington resolutions. A special commission of the "*Agence des prisonniers de guerre*" of Geneva undertook the task of corresponding with families and governments for the sake of such prisoners. Their number is great, and still growing as the armies advance and it is deemed expedient to make new arrests.

As to the others—women, children, and men who are not considered to be able to serve in the army or navy of their country—it is clear that the wording of the Washington resolutions do not extend to them. These victims of the state of war are not less worthy of commiseration. On the contrary, being feeble and often destitute, their situation is even more pitiable. The Swiss Government esteemed it to be among the duties of a neutral State to do whatever may be in its power to obviate the sufferings of such unfortunates, and especially, when subjects of neighbor States, to try and mediate for their early repatriation.

According to a decision of the Federal Council, dated September 22d, a Swiss office for repatriation of interned civil people ("*Bureau suisse de rapatriement des internés civils*") was created at Berne under the supervision of the Political Department. France and Germany, through their Legations, have already given their assent. Preliminary negotiations are in progress also with Austria.

Having obtained the lists of persons who are to be sent home, the office has to organize their reception at certain places on the borders; to take care of them, with the help of public benevolence, during their transit through Switzerland and take the necessary steps to secure their being met on their arrival in their own country. Certain questions, for instance, with respect to the standard of discrimination between men who are considered capable of bearing arms and those who are evidently under or above the age of useful service, offer some difficulties on account of the diversity of methods of classification in the countries concerned. However, it is to be hoped that they will be settled to the satisfaction of all.

The exchange and repatriation of all male civil prisoners under seventeen or eighteen and above fifty or sixty years, and of women, will be a boon, not only to the exiles, but to the governments themselves, who clearly have cares enough with the concentration of the others.

That Switzerland, although in arms for the safeguarding of her neutrality, may successfully and up to the end remain an oasis of peace and refuge and fulfil her various humanitarian duties, and, even if the fate of war be that of 1871, may be able to bear the exceptionally heavy one of disarming and interning unsuccessful armies, is the present wish of all her sons.

CHARLES BORGEAUD.